

Gunnarson Farmstead
U.S. Highway 20 at
New Sweden
Idaho Falls Vicinity
Bonneville County
Idaho

HABS No. ID-112

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ID
10-IDFA.V,
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

GUNNARSON FARMSTEAD

HABS No. ID-112

I. INTRODUCTION

Location: The Gunnarson Farmstead is located along U.S. Highway 20 in the New Sweden area of Bonneville County, about three miles west of the city of Idaho Falls, Idaho

Quad: Idaho Falls South

UTM: Zone 12, 409720 Easting, 4816440 Northing

Date of Construction: c. 1902 to c. 1920

Present Owner: Idaho Transportation Department and Buddy and Ranae Jefferson

Present Use: Farmstead

Significance: The Gunnarson Farmstead is significant for its association with Swedish and Swedish-American settlement in the rural New Sweden and Riverview areas of Idaho. These communities reflect Swedish patterns of settlement and the immigrants' adaptation to American lifeways. The Gunnarson Farmstead is also significant as a representative example of turn-of-the-century farmstead architecture.

Historian: Lon Johnson
Renewable Technologies, Inc.
Butte, Montana 59701

II. HISTORY OF THE GUNNARSON FARMSTEAD

A. INTRODUCTION

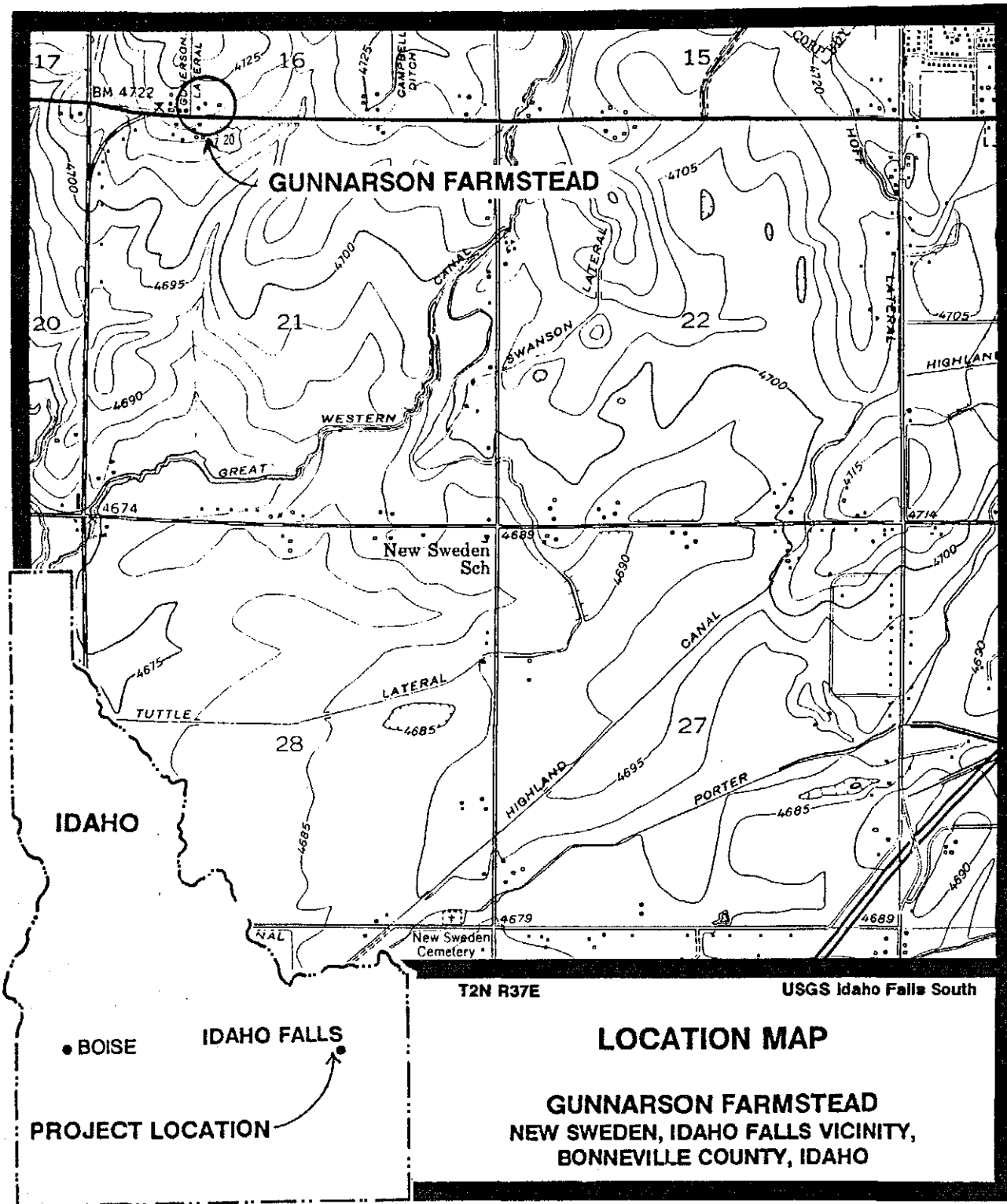
The Gunnarson Farmstead is located about three miles west of Idaho Falls, Idaho in a rural area known as New Sweden. The Gunnarson family arrived with the first Swedish-American settlers in 1895. They lived for several years on a rented farm prior to purchasing this farmstead in 1902. An in-depth description of Swedish-American settlement in Idaho, and the New Sweden area, can be found in the National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Swedish-American Farmsteads and Institutional Buildings in New Sweden and Riverview, Idaho" by Jennifer Eastman Attebery.¹ Most of the following historical background is taken from that form.

B. NEW SWEDEN AND RIVERVIEW HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the first United States census taken in Idaho Territory, in 1870, there were only 91 Swedish-born residents. Swedes began coming to the territory in large numbers during the 1880s. The number of Swedish-born Idahoans gradually rose to a peak in 1910-1920, and has declined since then. Swedes and the other Scandinavian groups made up a substantial percentage of Idaho's foreign-born population. Between 1910 and 1930 one-quarter of the state's foreign-born residents were Swedish, Danish, or Norwegian.

Like the Swedish population of the United States in general, a large number of Idaho's Swedish settlers were farmers, although the majority settled in urban areas. In 1930, for example, 36 percent of Idaho's Swedes were engaged in farming. Many of them got their start in farming by working as hired hands for already-established farmers.

The Swedish population in Idaho concentrated in two general regions, north Idaho and southeast Idaho. Swedes came to southeast Idaho in two distinct migrations. From Midwestern and Rocky Mountain states such as Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Montana, and Colorado, Swedes came into agricultural tracts being opened up to farming by various irrigation projects beginning in the 1890s.



Lands in New Sweden and Riverview were part of the Great Western Canal System's irrigation development, a Snake River irrigation project that also took in non-Swedish Mormon communities to the north and south and between the two communities. Filings for water rights were first put forward in 1886 for the Porter Canal and in 1891 for the Great Western Canal. Modest development provided water to farms owned by a few initial settlers, who were not of Swedish descent.

In 1894, the Great Western Land and Irrigation Company was formed to develop lands to be irrigated by the Great Western Canal System. The company promoted the development to Swedish communities in the Midwestern United States through local presentations and advertisements in Swedish-American newspapers. Farmers in Midwestern states like Nebraska and Iowa were susceptible to promotional schemes during the mid-1890s. During the Panic of 1893 and the ensuing national recession, many immigrants relocated to the Far West.

The first Swedish-American settlers arrived in New Sweden in the summer of 1894. On March 15 of the following year an excursion railway train supplied by the Great Western Canal promoters arrived with twenty more Swedish-American families, according to Idaho Falls newspaper reports. By 1900, thirty-one Swedish-American families had settled in New Sweden; seven, in Riverview. Most of the arable land in the New Sweden area was claimed, and the number of Swedish families remained the same in 1910 as it was in 1900. Some families had moved in, and a few had moved elsewhere. After 1910, both communities continued to attract a few Swedish and Swedish-American immigrants.

Additional land was opened for settlement in New Sweden during the 1900 to 1910 decade when the State of Idaho sold some of its school trust lands. Upon statehood, Idaho, like most other Western states, had received two sections in every township for the endowment of the public school system.² The states were permitted to sell this land subject to certain federal restrictions on size and price.³ Presumably, Idaho found it advantageous to sell land in New Sweden at the time since it was within an already settled irrigation district.

The typical adult in the New Sweden and Riverview areas immigrated to the United States as teenagers or young adults. The average age of immigration was 22 for men and 28 for women. (Median ages were 20 and 23, respectively.) A preponderance of young men who immigrated as 17- to 21-year-olds represented a response to Sweden's universal conscription laws, as well as a response to the division and re-division of ancestral farms in Sweden. Young women frequently immigrated as brides or brides-to-be joining men who had preceded them to the New World.

These young people came to the United States with work experience garnered on Swedish farms, or--less commonly--in sawmills, in mines, or on factory-estates. They came from various Swedish provinces, but many were from the areas that contributed most greatly to the North American immigration in general: Waermland, Smaaland, and Vaestergotland.

The immigrants to New Sweden and Riverview had gained further experience in the Midwest before coming to Idaho. On average, settlers in New Sweden had come to the United States by 1888, acquiring six years' experience before the New Sweden project opened up in 1894. In Riverview, settlers had come to the United States, on average, by 1893. Most had lived in Nebraska or Iowa; a few came to Idaho via Illinois, Ohio, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Colorado, Montana, or Utah. In Oakland, Nebraska, promotional talks by the Great Western developers were particularly successful. The Swedes' cumulative experience from Sweden and the Midwest could not prepare them, however, for irrigated agriculture. The reminiscences of the second generation frequently focus on this key aspect of adaptation to Western agriculture.

Settlement in New Sweden and Riverview proceeded in stages that can be characterized as an initial settlement era (1894-1905), and era of community-building (1905-1920), and an era of transition (1920-1941). During the first era, temporary shelters were built, farms were laid out and irrigation networks begun, churches and schools were founded, and buildings were erected for these institutions. Construction of buildings was accomplished by the settlers themselves or by the few carpenters among them. As one second-generation New Sweden resident points out, nearly every Swedish farmer possessed woodworking skills that were useful for constructing necessities such as a first house and trestlework and other wooden structures for the irrigation system. During the second era, temporary housing was replaced with substantial farmhouses, early housing was remodeled, large barns were built, and farmsteads expanded to resemble their current configurations. During the third era, the communities felt the impact of the depression years, a growing population, and automobile travel. This was an era of gradual adaptation to the culture of the surrounding region. Houses built in this period, still constructed by Swedish-American carpenters, were straight-forward renditions of pattern-book styles, primarily the Bungalow and Picturesque styles.

C. GUNNARSON FARMSTEAD HISTORY

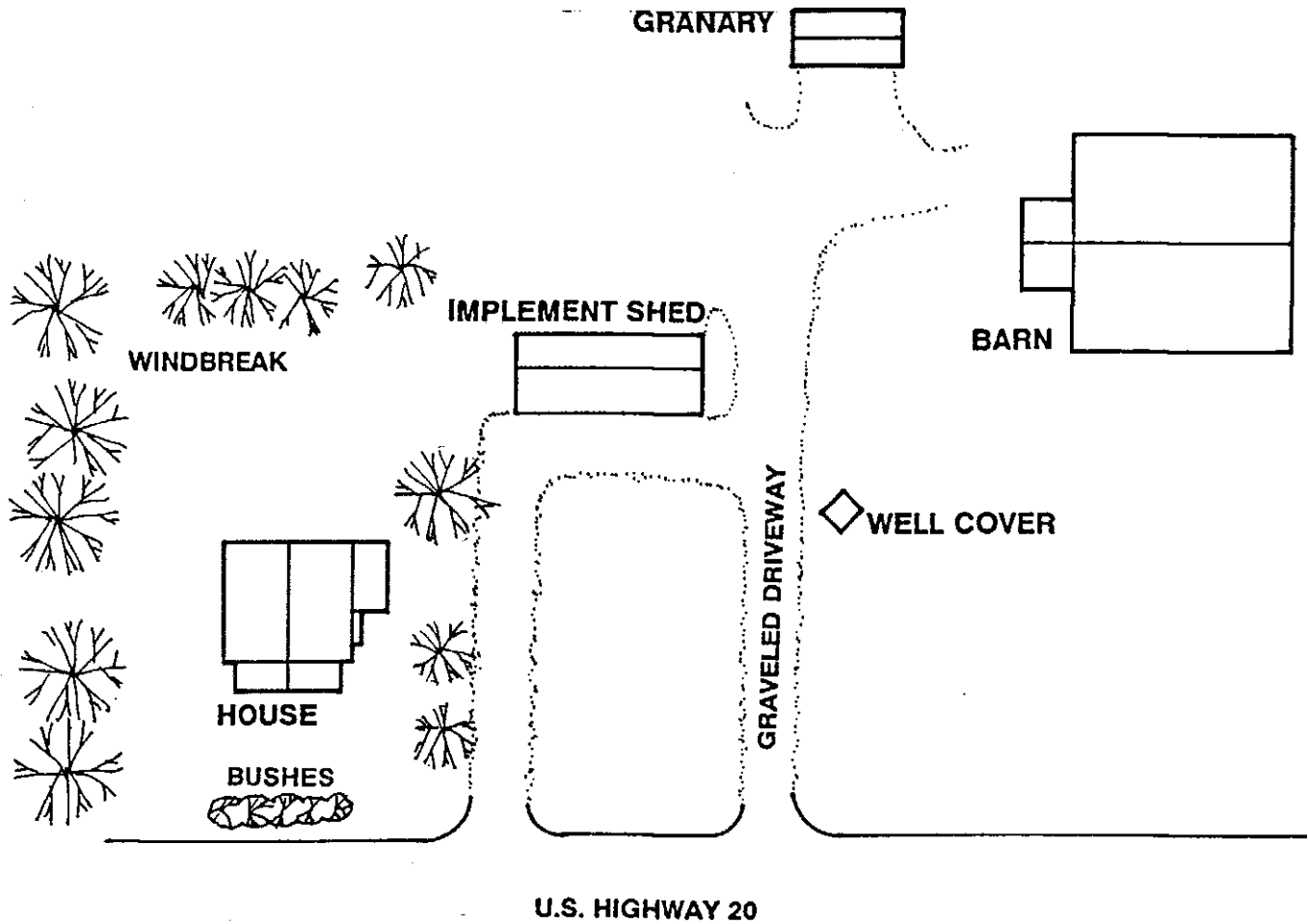
Gust Gunnarson closely fits the profile developed by Jennifer Eastman Attebery for Swedish-American immigrants to the New Sweden area. Gunnarson was born in Sweden in 1857 and emigrated to the United States in 1871. He lived for some time in Illinois prior to arriving in New Sweden at about 38 years of age. Augusta Gunnarson, his wife, was also born in Sweden and came to the United States in 1880. The Gunnarson's two sons, Albert and Chester, were born in Illinois.⁴

The Gunnarsons arrived in New Sweden in 1895.⁵ In the summer of that year, 20 Swedish-American families took advantage of an excursion train provided by the Great Western Canal to move to the area.⁶ Whether the Gunnarsons were part of that train is not known. The 1900 census found the Gunnarsons living on a rented farm.⁷

Gust Gunnarson purchased 80 acres of school trust lands from the State of Idaho on April 19, 1902. The Gunnarsons completed payments on the \$800 purchase price in 1909.⁸ In 1907, they purchased an additional 120 acres in the same section from the state for \$1400.⁹ Gust Gunnarson apparently died by 1915; Mrs. Gus S. Gunnarson is listed as the owner of the farm in 1916.¹⁰ Interviews with local residents recount that Augusta and her two sons farmed the property for many years.¹¹ The property remained in the Gunnarson family until 1950 when Helen Maria Gunnarson (widow of Albert) sold the original 80 acres to George W. Thompson.¹²

III. DESCRIPTION OF THE GUNNARSON FARMSTEAD

The Gunnarson Farmstead (see following page and HABS photographs ID-HABS-112) fronts the north side of U.S. Highway 20 about three miles west of Idaho Falls. A U-shaped driveway provides access from the highway. The farmstead consists of five historic buildings and structures. (The well cover dates to 1950). A windbreak of mature coniferous trees is located on the west side of the house, lining the Gunnarson Lateral of the New Sweden Irrigation District. A row of smaller trees is located on the north side of the house. A new house is under construction just to the north of the historic farmyard.



SITE PLAN

SCALE 1" = 50'



GUNNARSON FARMSTEAD
New Sweden,
Idaho Falls Vicinity,
Bonneville County,
Idaho

None of the buildings at the Gunnarson Farmstead readily display stylistic features that can be attributed to their Swedish-American builders. The Gunnarson Farmstead house, like others built on New Sweden farmsteads after the turn-of-the-century, was likely influenced by American pattern book designs. Although it has been suggested that the Swedish-Americans may have selected standardized designs reflective of their cultural background, such obvious and identifiable characteristics such as a prominent gabled, wall dormer over the front entry, are not found in the design of the Gunnarson house.

Construction of the Gunnarson Farmstead House (see HABS photographs ID-112-A) began in 1908 and continued until 1914.¹³ The house is an example of the Foursquare style which was the most commonly used style for farmhouses in the Midwest from about 1890 to the 1920s.¹⁴ The paired-double hung windows, full-length front porch, and almost square plan are all features representative of the style. The Gunnarson Farmstead house, however, differs from the typical Foursquare plan in one significant feature. Rather than the hipped or pyramid-shaped roof characteristic of the style, the house has an massive front gable roof with wide eaves and partially enclosed returns. The top heavy appearance of the house has been exaggerated by the later addition of wide siding in the gable ends.

The Gunnarson Farmstead house rests on a concrete foundation. An exposed section of the foundation shows the use of river rock as an aggregate. The top of the foundation is beveled to meet the brick-bearing walls. The brick is standard-sized, but of a light-gray color. The bricks have a frog (depression) in one side measuring 2 by 6 inches with angled sides. The origin of the brick is not known, although Keiter's 1911-12 directory for Idaho Falls lists five brick manufacturers in the Idaho Falls area.¹⁵ The gable roof is covered with wood shingles. The wide, flat eaves are sheathed with tongue-and-groove boards and supported by 4- by 4-inch horizontal brackets with a radius cut into the exterior end. The eaves have prominent returns at both gable ends. A corbelled brick chimney rises from the center of the ridge.

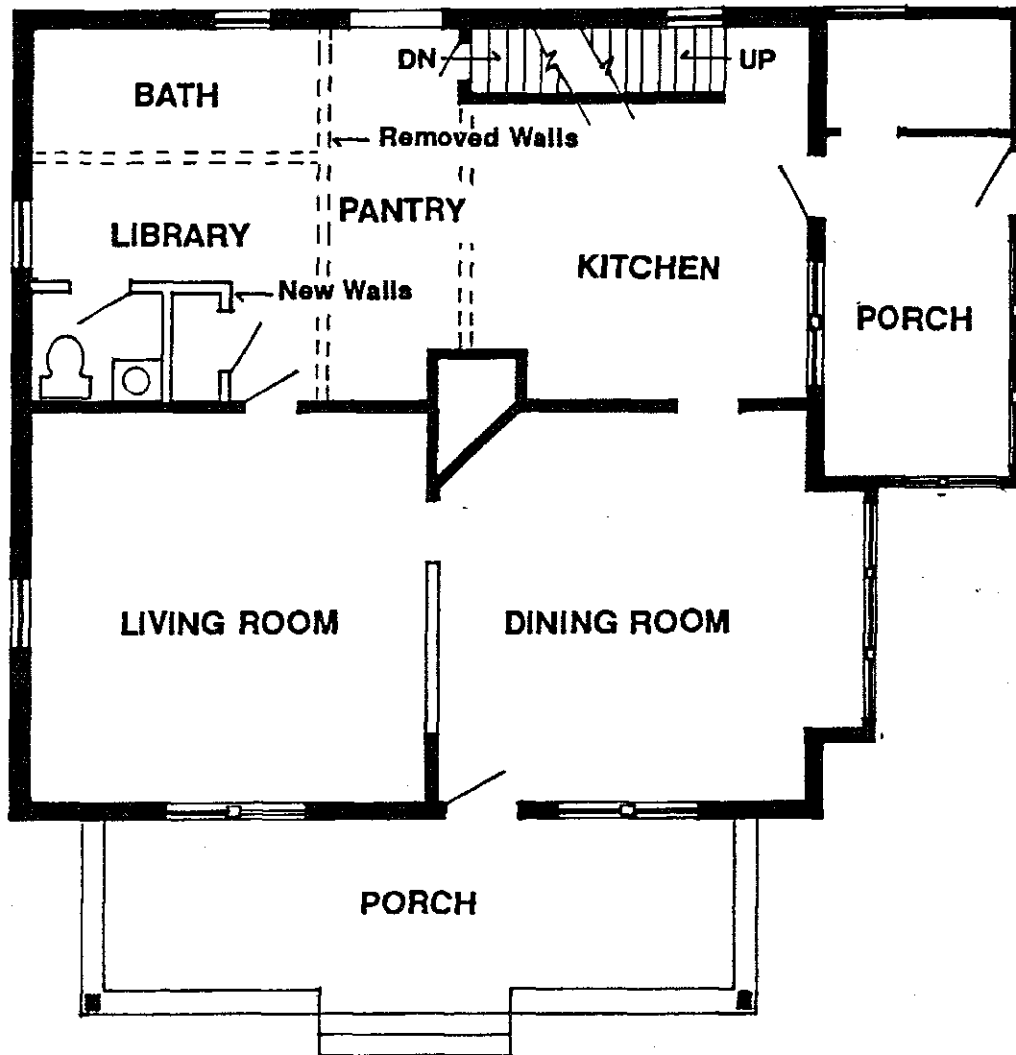
The front facade of the house is symmetrical except for the slightly off-center front door. Two paired, one-over-one double hung windows (all window sash are now replacement aluminum) are located at the first and second stories. These windows, like all windows in the house, have rough-surfaced, concrete lintels and concrete lug-sills. A central panel in the center of the second story is defined by header bricks. The panel contained the house's date of completion--1914--at one time.¹⁶ A two-paned horizontal sliding wood window is located in the front gable.

The full-length front porch has a gable roof with a shallower pitch than that found on the house. The porch deck is constructed of concrete as is the balustrade and cap. Tapered, square wood columns are located at the corners. What appear to be later 6- by 6-inch posts support the roof at mid-points.

The west side of the house is symmetrical with two one-over-one double hung windows at each floor. The east side of the house has undergone some modifications from its historic appearance. An enclosed wood frame porch with vertical tongue-and-groove siding appears to be historic. The porch has two one-over-one double hung windows facing south and three facing east. The east side also has a door topped with a transom window. A small sliding window is located on the north side. The slightly sloped shed roof of the porch has been topped with a contemporary deck with a wood balustrade and wood stairway extending along the north side. A square bay is also located on the east side of the house. The bay is stuccoed and has a single fixed window flanked by one-over-one windows. The historic hipped-roof of the bay has been replaced with a shed roof. A shadow of the former roof can be seen on the brick of the house; the segmental arch creating the opening is also visible. The second floor level of the east side originally had two one-over-one double hung windows. The northern-most window opening has been extended to the floor and a modern door installed to provide access to the deck. Openings on the north (rear) side of the house do not reflect the symmetry of the other sides. The four double-hung windows on this side--two on the first floor and two on the second--are all of different sizes. A slightly off-center door was also located on this side (the door opening has recently been widened). A single, square window is located in the gable end.

The interior of the house has been extensively gutted and remodeled over the past few years, and little historic fabric remains. Although some modifications are apparent, other descriptions of the positioning of rooms described below are based on an interview with the current owner.¹⁷ At the time of construction, the interior plan of the house reflected the symmetry of the exterior. The plan was initially divided into fourths with the northwest quarter modified on each floor to accommodate smaller room needs.

The first floor of the house has three main rooms--a living room, dining room, and kitchen. The northwest quarter of the house originally contained a bathroom, pantry, and library. The upstairs had three large bedrooms with a bathroom and a smaller bedroom in the northwest quarter. It is not known whether the location of either the first or second floor baths is original.

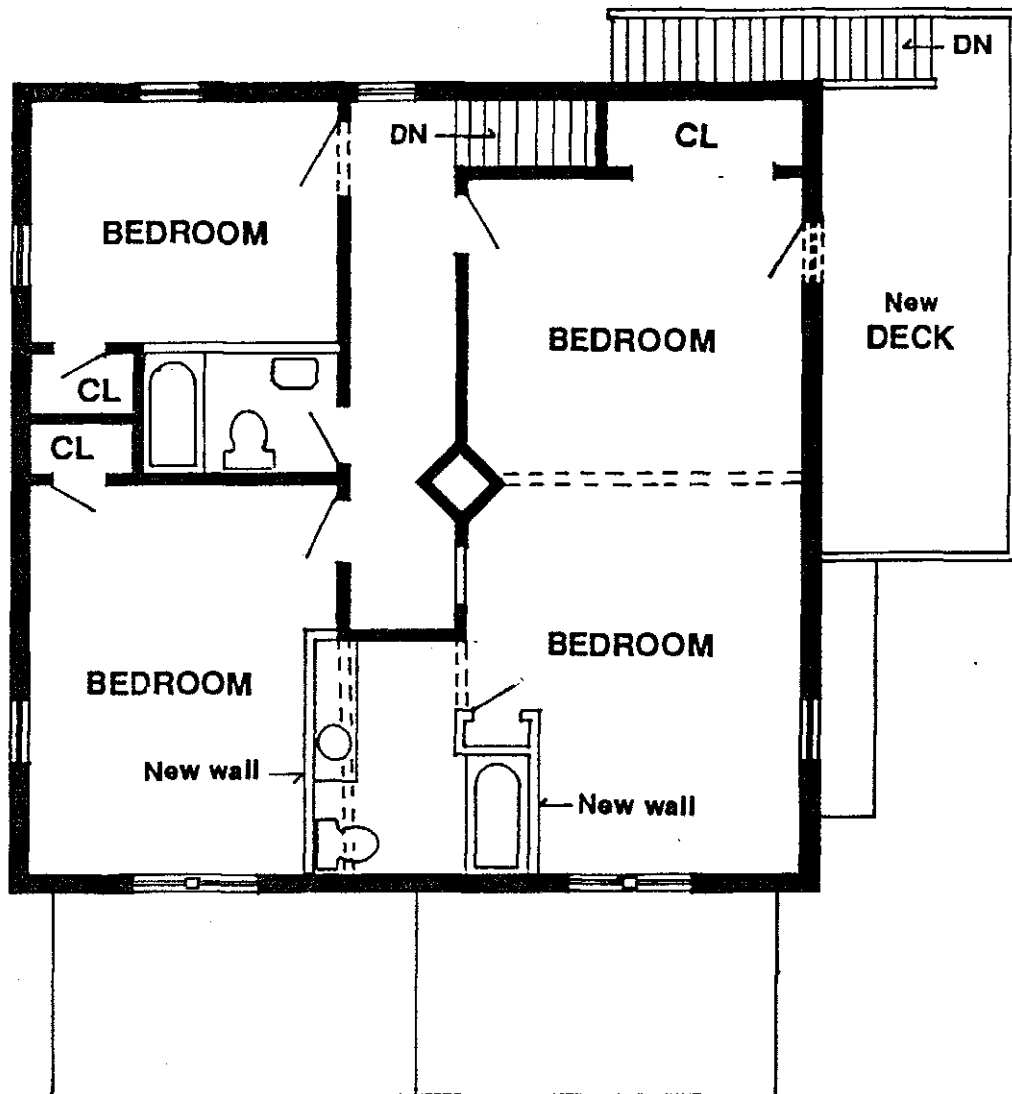


FIRST FLOOR PLAN

SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"



GUNNARSON FARMSTEAD HOUSE
New Sweden, Idaho Falls Vicinity,
Bonneville County, Idaho



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"



GUNNARSON FARMSTEAD HOUSE
New Sweden, Idaho Falls Vicinity,
Bonneville County, Idaho

The Implement Shed (see HABS photographs ID-112-B) is located just to the northeast of the house, and closes the upper end of the U-shaped driveway. The building measures 50 feet 5 inches by 22 feet 4 inches. The building is divided into two sections. Three bays open from the north side and take up a majority of the building. On the east end of the building is an enclosed machine shop. The building has a concrete foundation and wood frame walls. The walls are covered with drop siding. The salt box roof is constructed of 2- by 4-inch rafters and covered with corrugated metal roofing. Wood doors constructed of horizontal drop siding are located on the east and west ends. The building has three window openings on the south side, and one each of the east and west side. Only one of the openings retains its original four-light sash. Similar sized openings are also located in the east and west gables.

The Granary (see HABS photographs ID-112-C) is located between the Implement Shed and the Barn, and is the northern-most structure at the farmstead. The structure measures 30 feet 5 inches by 14 feet 3 inches. It rests on wood timbers suggesting it may have been moved from another location. The wood frame is clad with drop siding. The roof is comprised of 2- by 4-inch rafters covered with corrugated metal roofing. An outswinging door constructed of vertical boards provides access from the south side. Small square openings with drop sided doors are located just below the rafter plate to either side of the door and in each gable end. Another small opening to the west of the door is boarded over.

The Barn (see HABS photographs ID-112-D) is a variation of what has been described as a Midwest three-portal barn.¹⁸ The plan is of a central bay for loose hay storage (open from floor to rafters) flanked on both sides by stabling aisles. The aisles have additional hay storage areas above them. An unusual variation in the Gunnarson Barn is the projecting gable-roofed entry structure. This structure is in actuality a hay hood extended to the ground. Another interesting feature found in the building is its structural framing. The builder used small dimension lumber in "stick" construction without building up pieces to create trusses to support the roof.

The barn is square, measuring 60 feet 3 inches on each side. The entry structure extends 14 feet 1 inch from the west side and is 24 feet wide. The exterior walls rest on a lava rock foundation. The frame of the building is constructed as follows: exterior walls are 2- by 6-inch studs at 2-feet on center. The rafters are 2- by 6-inch boards at 2-feet on center. Two interior transverse walls rise at third points to support side hay mows. The northern wall is constructed of 2- by 6-inch studs at 2-feet on center and the southern wall is constructed of 4- by 6-inch studs at 4-feet on

center. The southern aisle has a feeding aisle running along its north side within the center aisle of the barn. From the hay mow floors, 2- by 6-inch studs at 2-foot on center rise to support the rafters. The central hay mow is open from the floor to the roof. A hay fork runs on tracks under the ridge.

The exterior of the barn is sheathed with drop siding. The spaced 1- by 6-inch roof sheathing is covered with wood shingles. A small gable-roofed, louvered ventilator rises from the middle of the ridge. Bands of four-light windows which slide upward line the north and south sides of the barn. The east side of the barn has vertical board rolling doors (the rolling hardware is cast with "Allit MFG Co/ Pat 11-13-1901 & 12-8-1903") providing access to the side aisles and a dutch door into the aisle to the north of the south aisle. The dutch door and all openings above the first floor are topped with wood pediments. Above each of the side aisles is an outward swinging vertical board loft door; another door is also located off center at this level. Slightly above each door and placed inward is a four-over-four double hung window. Another pair of identical windows is located near the ridge. On the west end of the main body of the barn a rolling door provides access to the south aisle and a dutch door provides access to the north aisle. The loft doors and window just above them are identical to those on the east side. The entry structure has two four-over-four windows just below the gable. A full-width door opening is located on the north side of the entry structure. It is assumed that a similar opening existed on the south side, but was covered over when this elevation was re-sided at an unknown date. A boarded window opening is now located on this side.

The last feature at the farmstead is a Concrete Well Cover located just to the east of the east-leg of the U-shaped driveway. The well cover measures 8 feet 9 inches by 10 feet 4 inches. Incised in the concrete is: "1950/G. Forrest Thompson, Jr./Alvin Ar(o or a)ve.

IV. FUTURE OF THE PROPERTY

The Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), with the assistance of the Federal Highway Administration, plans to widen a 3.5 mile segment of U.S. Highway 20 immediately west of the Idaho Falls city limits. The existing two-lane highway was constructed about 40 years ago, and is inadequate for the current traffic load. The proposed reconstruction project is a five-lane highway. The improved highway will result in the loss of part of the historic fabric which qualified the New Sweden and Riverview areas for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. These losses include the demolition of the house at the Gunnarson Farmstead and the demolition of the house and potato cellar at the adjoining Hjelm Farmstead.

A cultural resource survey in 1991 along the existing route of U.S. Highway 20 identified a number of properties eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Subsequently, a Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Swedish-American Farmsteads and Institutional Buildings in New Sweden and Riverview, Idaho," was accepted by the Keeper of the National Register as a basis for evaluating the properties.

As part of its planning process, the ITD evaluated five alternatives for the reconstruction project. It was found that all alternatives, with the exception of a no-build alternative, would affect historic properties to varying degrees.

In accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Federal Highway Administration, the Idaho Transportation Department, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer determined in 1991 that the reconstruction project would have an adverse effect on properties eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. To mitigate this adverse effect, the ITD agreed to undertake recordation of two of the properties to the standards of the Historic American Building Survey (HABS). This historical narrative and accompanying photographs are the principal products of the HABS survey.

V. ENDNOTES

1. United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "Swedish-American Farmsteads and Institutional Buildings in New Sweden and Riverview, Idaho," by Jennifer Eastman Attebery. Copy located at Idaho State Historic Preservation Office, Boise.
2. Samuel Trask Dana, Forest and Range Policy (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1956), 34-35.
3. Montana Department of Agriculture and Publicity, The Resources and Opportunities of Montana (Helena: Independent Publishing Company, 1914), 144.
4. U.S. Department of Commerce, 1900 Census of the United States. Located at Family History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Idaho Falls. Microfilm Roll No. 1240232.
5. Post-Register (Idaho Falls), 12 February 1939.
6. United States Department of the Interior, "Swedish-American Farmsteads and Institutional Buildings in New Sweden and Riverview, Idaho."
7. U.S. Department of Commerce, 1900 Census of the United States.
8. Bonneville County Clerk and Recorder's Office, Deed Book Z, 228.
9. Bonneville County Clerk and Recorder's Office, Deed Book 18, 482.
10. Kelly's Farm Directory, 1915-1916, of Bonneville, Jefferson and Madison Counties, Idaho (Boise: K-M-S Co., [1916]).
11. Blanche Holmer, Interview by Mary McCormick, 13 July 1994; Milo Beckman, Telephone interview by Mary McCormick, 13 July 1994.
12. Bonneville County Clerk and Recorder's Office, Deed Book 72, 353.
13. Ranae Jefferson, Interview by Lon Johnson and Mary McCormick, 14 July 1994.
14. Fred W. Peterson, Homes in the Heartland (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1992), 174.
15. Geo. P. Keiter's Idaho Falls City and Bonneville, Bingham and Fremont Counties, Idaho Directory, 1911-1912 (St. Paul: Keiter Directory Company, 1911).
16. Local residents' memory of the date varies. The current owner, Ranae Jefferson, stated that it was 1914.

17. Ranae Jefferson, Interview by Lon Johnson and Mary McCormick, 14 July 1994.
18. Allen G. Noble, Wood, Brick & Stone: The North American Settlement Landscape, vol. 2, Barns and Farm Structures (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 64.

VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Holmer, Blanche. Interview by Mary McCormick (Renewable Technologies, Inc.), 13 July 1994.

Horton, Alice, Afton Bitton, Patti Sherlock, ed. Beautiful Bonneville. Logan, Utah: Herff Jones, 1989.

Jefferson, Ranae. Interview by Lon Johnson and Mary McCormick (Renewable Technologies, Inc.), 14 July 1994.

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Peterson, Fred. Homes in the Heartland. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1992.

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U.S. Department of the Interior. National Park Service. "Swedish-American Farmsteads and Institutional Buildings in New Sweden and Riverview, Idaho," by Jennifer Eastman Attebery. Copy located at Idaho State Historic Preservation Office, Boise.